the time taken for grant of mineral concession has been more than that prescribed in the Mineral Concession Rules, 1960. The High Level Committee (HLC) constituted by the Planning Commission has evaluated the reasons for the same and recommended measures for reducing the delays. Report of the HLC is available on the website of Ministry of Mines. (http://mines.nic.in/).

(c) and (d) Instances of illegal mining from time to time have come to the notice of the Central Government. State Governments have been empowered to frame rules under Section 23C of the Mines and Minerals (Development & Régulation) Act, 1957 for prevention of illegal mining, transportation and storage of minerals etc. The Central Government has also directed State Governments to constitute task forces at State/District level for preventing illegal mining and the situation is being monitored.

Allocation of mining blocks

122. SHRI N. R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have received several representations requesting for giving adequate emphasis to value-added industries like steel, power and cement plants, by allocating mining blocks;

(b) if so, the steps Government have taken in this direction, so far;

(c) whether Government would henceforth consider allocating mining blocks to captive industries on preferential basis as it would lead to growth of economic development in the country; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY): (a) to (d) Some representations have been received in the Ministry to give preference to value-adder in grant of mineral concession, including mining lease. Provisions already exist in the Mines and Minerals (Development & Regulation) Act, 1957 and Rules framed thereunder whereby State Government may give preference to a value adder while granting mineral concession.

Gold and diamond reserves

123. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether, according to the estimates of Geological Survey of India, the country has 475 million carats of gold and diamond reserves, worth Rs. six lakh crore;

(b) if so, the details thereof, location-wise and State-wise;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the country imports nearly 800 tonnes of gold every year;

(d) if so, the reasons for non-exploration of such mineral-wealth; and

(e) the details of the private companies to whom leases for mining gold and diamond have been given, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY): (a) and (b) As per National Mineral Inventory prepared by Indian Bureau of Mines,